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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results of a retrospective study of the 3-year Head Start Planned Variation (HSPV) experience. The long-term residual effects of HSPV's effort to install and implement educational models in various communities are discussed with emphasis on the effects on the models and sponsors themselves. Six models were studied: Bank Street, Far West, High/Scope, and the models of the Universities of Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon. The teachers of the model programs were studied most intensively under the assumption that they would receive the strongest impact of the programs. Two strategies of study were used: teacher observation and interviews with teachers and key personnel, administrators, and some parents. In the presentation of the results concerning which components of the HSPV models persisted, the models are grouped into "academic" and "child development" categories according to their educational orientation, and the five main findings are reported and explained. Suggestions for what might be expected of models in an experiment of this scope and duration are presented. (SDH)

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HSPV IN RETROSPECT*

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In 1973-1974 a retrospective study of the Head Start Planned Variation experience was commissioned by the Office of Child Development. Its interest was in the long-term residual effects of HSPV's 3 year effort to install and implement educational models in various communities. The initial question was "What was left of the models?" The Huron Institute broadened this question by asking, "What was the impact of the HSPV experience?"

We assumed that the strongest effects of HSPV would be seen in the 8 models which had been the longest in operation. Since one of these models did not wish to participate and a second was eliminated because it was not classroom oriented, the six models actually studied were: Bank Street, Far West, High/Scope, and the models of the Universities of Arizona, Kansas and Oregon.

We strongly felt that the target population for models, though ultimately meant to be children, had to be teachers. Unlike elementary school programs in which children are learning to or know how to read, preschool education cannot rely as heavily on written material to structure a program. A preschool program

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depends much more explicitly upon the teacher as the vehicle for instruction.[1]

Our assumption was that teachers were a model's first point of contact and impact. If a model could not transmit its procedures and goals to the teacher, it could travel no further to children, parents, etc. Therefore we chose teachers as the group which potentially would receive the strongest impact and the persons who would be studied most intensively.

There were two strategies used in this follow-up study of HSPV. One was observations of teachers in their classrooms (our priorities were former HSPV teachers) with what we preferred to call an "observation guide" - i.e. a list of the key components of their former P.V. model on which the degree of teachers' implementation was rated. Our second strategy was interviewing teachers and key personnel, administrators and sometimes parents. Most interviews were taped; in the case of refusals, notes were taken.

On the basis of a pilot study, we decided that a team of 2 should visit 2 former sites of one model for 3-5 days each, record their observations, and tape their interviews. Conclusions about the extent of model persistence and the general impact or importance of the model were made by Huron staff and

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[1] Even the so-called academic models, Kansas and Oregon, must rely on teachers a great deal. Kansas' strong component of positive reinforcement can only be delivered by a person. Oregon's emphasis on correction of error can only be diagnosed by a human being.

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the field team which visited each model. These staff personnel first read all the transcripts from both sites of a model. They they met for a 2 to 3 day discussion with the team. At that meeting each person advanced theories about persistence and impact and presented evidence from tape transcriptions until everyone agreed on an outline of the events in that site and conclusions about the data.

The central questions we addressed were "What components of models persisted?" And how could we characterize "impact" - a more difficult question. In relation to persistence, we found that models seemed to fall into two large categories: In some sites there was general agreement on which components of a model were left, both according to the observations of Huron staff and reports of site staff. We called this first category "persistence-in-fact." In other sites Huron staff did not observe model implementation, but site staff talked as if they were still using the model in every way. We called this latter phenomenon "persistence-in-the-eyes-of-the-beholder."

With this as a framework, we will present our findings, offer some tentative explanations for them, and then suggest what might be expected of models in an experiment of this scope and duration.

Model Persistence: What's Left?

In considering our findings we grouped models into two categories: "academic", which includes Oregon and Kansas and "child development," which includes Bank Street, Far West, High/

Scope, and the University of Arizona. Distinctions between these two groups generally rest in their attitude toward content and how to convey it. Generally, Kansas and Oregon concentrate on reading, writing and arithmetic skills along with teacher control of materials and procedures. Child development models, on the other hand, are more process oriented, tend to emphasize other sorts of content areas such as language, view play as work, and usually give the child a great deal of responsibility to determine what he or she will learn, and when.

Our findings were the following:

1. In sites that had child development models the only uniform feature which remained across models was the HSPV sponsor-created position of a local person whose job it was to spend time training teachers in the model.
2. In sites that had child development models, former HSPV teachers who were still teaching tended to implement one or two components of their former model. Components which teachers shared were the more superficial ones.
3. Only 2 of 14 sites had nearly complete model persistence: one of Bank Street and one of the University of Kansas.
4. Oregon appears to be more vulnerable to diminished use or non-use than any other model compared to its reported former level of implementation during the experiment.

5. A general kind of impact could be attributed more to the experiment itself than a particular model and could be called increased professionalism.

We will briefly discuss these findings.

1. In child development models the sponsor created position of a local trainer for teachers was maintained. During HSPV this position was used solely to train teachers in the model. These positions now retain a training function, but the content has usually been either broadened beyond the model or has left the model behind. The most complete and fullest impact of models has been on these local trainers, who in most cases regard their HSPV participation as a tremendous step in their professional growth and, in some cases, as a personal experience of great depth.

2. When we say that teachers in child development models share persistence in implementing superficial components, we mean those model components which, for example, specify room arrangement or scheduling. We do not imply that such components are unimportant, since they are essential to good classroom functioning. However, they are not the components which most reflect the sponsor's differential intentions and goals which must be worked at and internalized on a day-by-day basis. Other model components these teachers implement are idiosyncratic and non-comparable from class to class.

Teachers do not compare their level of implementation to the model's theoretical standard. Instead, they seem to view whatever selection of model components they have retained as

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reasonable and they tend to talk about their performance as embodying the model. In most cases the perception of our field staff was that teachers' level of implementation was, in fact, quite partial. Some of this discrepancy can be attributed to the perennial difficulties both observers and implementors have understanding what concrete examples can exemplify child development model components, as they are most frequently stated in terms of all-encompassing goals. When confronted with this dilemma observers may tend to be stricter as to how well components are really implemented while, by contrast, teachers may be looser as to what behaviors really "fit" into a model's definition. However, only superficial persistence of the child development models may also be explained either by sponsor's lack of detailed and concrete ideas for model implementation or, if they had such ideas, their inability to successfully transmit them to teachers. Implementation of these models was also impaired by a general absence of concrete, definite expectations for teachers and monitoring, if it existed at all, was of the most infrequent and loose kind.

3. One site of Bank Street and one of Kansas are the only sites of 14 which retain full model implementation. By this we mean that all components are present to a high degree in all classrooms, and the teachers both know and refer often to the model.

Three observations seem important about these two sites. First, there are two phenomena which differentiate these sites from all others, one dependent on the site, the other on the sponsor. In the case of both sites, teachers and parents as

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well as administrators see themselves as actively participating and having a voice in the initial decision to enter HSPV, and they are now interested in the maintenance and expansion of the model and enthusiastically train new teachers in it.

Second, these two sites viewed the sponsor personnel with whom they had contact as accepting of them and as working with them. The models, in turn, seemed extraordinarily responsive to the sites' input, questions and requests. This was unusual; other sites experienced their relationship to sponsors differently: some as threatening, some neutrally, some as a resource needing "pushing" to "produce", and some as a transitory influence with whom one interacted in a brief and cursory way.

Third, these 2 sites of Kansas and Bank Street also seemed an ideal match for their particular model. Though this point deserves more attention than we can give it in this paper, we would like to underscore both the rarity and importance of the respect and mutuality that existed between these sites and their models.

4. The site material Oregon produced was unique in our study. During HSPV, Oregon reportedly had a high level of implementation in one of the two sites we visited; in both sites, however, teacher reaction to the model was either openly skeptical, hostile, or at the least, ambivalent. We found this in no other site of no other model.

Very few model components per se were left. Though administrators in these sites ofter talked of dropping the model for philosophical or ideological reasons, teachers expressed

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their difficulty with the model in terms of the pressure on children and particularly on the way they themselves had been treated by sponsor staff. The most frequent references were to the model's concentration on teachers' classroom "errors" and the nonreceptiveness of sponsor staff to teacher input or questions. Interestingly, Oregon is the only example of model training techniques which are contradictory to model tenants. While it advocates positive reinforcement techniques in working with children, according to site reports it appears to use negative reinforcement frequently in training teachers.

5. The professional behavior of teachers can be thought of as a continuum where at one end one may possess the simplest attributes of a teacher, and at the other an array of standards and criteria for both classroom performance and professional relationships. In some cases, HSPV brought teachers who had had no group contact together for the first time during model training - a practice which they incorporated into their professional schedules after HSPV. On the other hand, other sites adapted or modified ideas introduced by models: sequenced curriculum, record-keeping on children, or informal teacher-designed tests for child progress. The notion that these are important aspects of and standards for an educational program can be attributed both to models and to the experiment itself.

One can judge these findings enormously encouraging or discouraging depending on one's expectations for a 3 year effort

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at educational change. Theoretically, Planned Variation offered one of two kinds of services to sites: (1) mobile teacher training or (2) a more continuous sort of in-service training. Which kind of service a site received depended not only on what the sponsor was prepared to give, but also on what the site was ready to receive. These two kinds of services imply different intentions and "readiness" to deliver a model on the part of the sponsor, which ideally should be matched to different levels of functioning for teachers.

Teacher training institutions have traditionally been internally consistent, espousing one philosophy or belief system, such as "open education." Their clients are usually untrained teachers - that is, persons who have not devoted much time to thinking about teaching or systematically planning for it. A teacher-training orientation would have been the most suitable one for most teachers in the Head Start sites we visited since they were inexperienced because they were either new teachers or paraprofessionals.

However, providing in-service training was a role more appropriate to most sponsors' capabilities. In-service is characterized by two features when it is suitably applied: (1) infrequent short term learning sequences in the form of workshops lasting a few days and (2) an audience of trained and/or experienced teachers. Since most sponsors were not prepared to provide an in-depth experience to sites, both by virtue of contract restraints and also usually in terms of their staff's lack of

familiarity with preschool children and training issues, they could only operate on an in-service basis.

It seems to us that to have any beneficial outcomes, an innovation must involve some sort of assessment of site needs and capabilities. Since an educational innovation is nearly always a service program as well, one view is that it should be located where it will be utilized to its fullest advantage. Though it would have been relatively strightforward to assess the general needs of teachers at sites, it would have been much more difficult to assess the capability of sponsors and models for a successful match of needs and service.

The changes most models sought to make in Head Start classrooms were ambitious at least on paper. In most cases, teachers were required to make attitudinal and behavioral changes. The training demands this placed on Planned Variation were unusually serious. For one thing because Head Start has served as a career ladder program and its salaries are rarely, if ever, competitive with other teaching jobs, teacher turnover has been endemic to the program. A more long term or continuous training effort than HSPV's may be necessary for this reason alone. Moreover, even without a turnover problem, the nature of teaching itself is a process we consider to require ongoing learning. The concept of a mobile training institution is probably not the most effective answer to either lack of training or need for ongoing training. Another objection to this solution is the problems created for the staffing and continuity of a "mobile" institution. Only a small pool of persons is available for and can

continually tolerate as much travel as HSPV required. We think the development of a resource on site for the purpose of continuing training input would be more effective and cost beneficial.

A basic question we must raise here is whether HSPV models provided any sort of suitable solution to training/educational problems. Our site material indicates that most models were neither well-developed nor comprehensive during HSPV. "Comprehensive" we think, is defined by whether a model has thought through all the major teaching issues, but not necessarily by its possessing curriculum and strategies to address each one. Anyone who has spent time in a classroom knows that numerous incidents arise which demand a response from teachers and for which there is often no ready answer. While these specific incidents are endless, it is possible for them to be included or excluded from the educational system a teacher utilizes by a set of internally consistent rational principles. In other words, a model needs to explicitly order the array of potential classroom occurrences within its system of priorities in order to fully provide educational assistance to communities.

The lack of model persistence we found in most sites might be explained by the prematurity of HSPV, an inadequate number of years devoted to it, or perhaps even to teacher inadequacy. However we feel it primarily reflects the capability of models during HSPV - they were clearly developing and not "complete." In this light, we think one of the more important aspects of HSPV went unmonitored - the development of models themselves: what

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they were learning and from which experiences. The degree of self-consciousness and the success of sponsor learning has a possible potential for stronger impact than either child progress or teacher training. Sponsors will continue to effect greater and greater numbers of teachers and children. As a result of their national visibility, their reputed expertise increases the number of new relationships they form with communities. Therefore, educational innovations should consider their effects not only on the "target population" receiving service for a limited period of time, but should also track the development of those delivering that service. In the case of HSPV, the true target population may have been sponsors and models. The prestige of a national experiment has awarded them enough legitimacy to additionally effect at least double or triple the numbers of teachers and children in HSPV. Information on their learning and principles of operation may be of more ultimate and direct importance than any test score gains in the service of improving the quality of education for young children.